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SUBJECT: KABILA ALLIES LOOK AHEAD

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROGER MEECE. REASON 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Kabila allies Kamitatu and Ghonda told the Ambassador November 1 they were optimistic about elections, with Kabila garnering a total percentage in the mid-50,s percentile. Kamitatu believes the new National Assembly organization is moving forward, and both the Congolese politicians concurred that the newly-elected Assembly will be key to future GDRC success. While both share concerns about Kinshasa security, neither appeared particularly alarmed. Both agreed more could be done by the presidential candidates to ensure calm. Both are looking forward to the composition and challenges of a future GDRC government to be installed by year's end. Both also welcomed the recent U.S. Executive Order implementing UNSC sanctions. End summary.

Election Optimism

¶2. (C) Two of President Kabila's political allies, former National Assembly Speaker Olivier Kamitatu and former Foreign Minister Antoine Ghonda, expressed optimism about election results to the Ambassador at a November 2 breakfast at the CMR. Both concurred that voter turnout in many areas, including Kinshasa, appeared to have run a bit behind that recorded in the July 30 first round, although still at high levels relative to those recorded in many countries. Both Kamitatu and Ghonda also believed that voter participation in the Kasai provinces had increased as well, presumably by voters who recognized that an election boycott, a factor in the first round, did not serve their interests.

¶3. (C) Kamitatu asserted he had good information about the roughly 4 million votes tabulated thus far by the Independent Election Commission, with no great surprises. Kabila was scoring above his first-round totals in Kinshasa and Bandundu province, which Kamitatu attributed primarily to the second-round support of Antoine Gizenga,s PALU party to Kabila,s candidacy. He noted that the very limited results to date did not provide a sufficient basis to project definitive results, but guessed from information now available that Kabila would end up with an election victory, gaining a majority in the mid-50,s percentile. Ghonda agreed with this assessment.

The National Assembly Factor

¶4. (C) Kamitatu noted the key importance to the DRC's future of the newly-elected National Assembly and the new provincial assemblies. He noted that the provincial assembly results arising from the October 29 elections also will be interesting to help demonstrate whether presidential voting preferences were primarily due to the appeal of the individual candidates or reflective of broader party and institutional support. In other words, for example, would Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC party gain provincial assembly majorities and (indirectly) governorships in proportion to his presidential vote or would there be divergent results?

¶5. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's questions, Kamitatu

expressed confidence that the new National Assembly would be able to adopt internal rules and procedures, and subsequently elect Assembly officers, by the end of November. He took on board the Ambassador's points that it is important for the Assembly rules to provide adequate representation and roles for the array of parliamentary parties represented in the Assembly, and specifically for a meaningful role by the parliamentary minority. Both Kamitatu and Ghonda agreed that the National Assembly can and should play a critical role in future GDRC governance, and that work to build effective parliamentary institutions and operations, notably at the committee level, is a key requirement. Kamitatu observed that a majority of the newly-elected Assembly members are new to office, and he said he believed most are well-motivated to be effective in their new roles. Kamitatu expressed some skepticism that Kabila's preferred candidate for National Assembly president, Vital Kamarhe, would be able to gain majority support, but he was unsure about who might be a preferred alternative.

The Security Environment

¶16. (C) Both Kamitatu and Ghonda shared their concerns about the overall security environment, and specifically reaction to election results when they are announced, although neither appeared particularly alarmed. Kamitatu argued that Gizenga's support for Kabila represented an important mitigating factor for the threat of significant violence in Kinshasa and Bandundu. Both Kamitatu and Ghonda were a bit more concerned about prospects for disruptions in Equateur province (Note: Bemba's base area. End note). The Ambassador argued that both presidential candidates could do more to emphasize to their respective followers the need for calm. He noted that, in fact, a meeting of the two candidates with a joint message calling for continued calm would be especially useful. Ghonda doubted that Kabila could meet now with Bemba in light of the latter's pre-election provocative rhetoric and actions. Both Kamitatu and Ghonda fully agreed with the Ambassador's observation that the large majority of Congolese, whatever their political preferences, wanted nothing more than an end to confrontation and violence, and an opportunity to pursue their lives in peace. Any more violence would further erode the perceived standing of the two leaders, and indeed that of Congolese politicians generally, and deepen the already pronounced cynicism of many Congolese.

¶17. (C) The Ambassador noted that the presidency's apparent continuing action to keep Bemba's television stations off the air represents arbitrary action outside of established channels. Ghonda put up a weak defense, asserting that the High Media Authority (HAM) is too weak, and that pre-election broadcasts by Bemba's television were unacceptable. While conceding the latter point, the Ambassador underscored that unilateral action by the presidency is an inappropriate response, provides further ammunition to government critics, and will oblige the international community sooner or later to criticize the government's actions. Ghonda accepted the point.

Future Government

¶18. (C) All three individuals agreed on the importance of timely formation of a new government following the inauguration of an elected President. The Ambassador asked if PALU president Antoine Gizenga appeared physically up to the demanding schedule of being Prime Minister, per the apparent agreement worked out with the presidency. Kamitatu observed that clearly PALU had the prerogative under the political deal to name the Prime Minister, and he assumed that would be Gizenga, but acknowledged the demands of the office would be immense. He noted, however, that PALU had few if any other prominent individuals who would be obvious candidates for the job. Kamitatu also observed that to be effective, the new Prime Minister will need to demonstrate considerable political skill to negotiate among the various

political parties and factions in the government and National Assembly.

¶9. (C) Neither Ghonda nor Kamitatu offered much speculation about the specific composition of the new government, other than noting the challenges of ensuring needed balance in the cabinet among various regional, party, ethnic, and other interests. Both Ghonda and Kamitatu acknowledged the Ambassador's assertion of the particular importance of good leadership in key economic posts. All three agreed that it will be important for the new government to demonstrate to the Congolese people signs that it will be setting new directions in how it operates, underscoring a break with decades of past bad and ineffective governance.

Implementation of Sanctions

¶10. (C) The Ambassador briefed on the U.S. Executive Order issued earlier in the week implementing UNSC-approved sanctions, noting the importance of the measure underscoring US interest in and support for a peaceful post-election DRC. Both Kamitatu and Ghonda very much welcomed the action, which has been receiving broad press coverage in Kinshasa. The Ambassador had separately briefed key Presidency aide Marcellin Chisambo by telephone the previous day on the action, and he also had welcomed the order.

Comment: Focus on the Future

¶11. (C) While neither Ghonda nor Kamitatu dismissed prospects for immediate security disruptions, both were clearly focused on the structure and operations of the future GDRC government. Both seemed reasonably optimistic. Kamitatu in particular emphasized the potential importance of the future provincial governments and the National Assembly. While a part of the new presidential majority in the parliament, Kamitatu was also careful to distinguish himself and others as members of other parties allied with, but not a part of, Kabila's PPRD party and group. End comment.

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